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SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - LAGOS

REF A: 08 STATE 74840; B: 09 STATE 57623

COUNTRY CONDITIONS

¶1. (SBU) Background: Nigeria covers 356,669 sq miles and has a population of approximately 149 million. The major languages are English (official), Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. Approximately 60% of the population is below the poverty line for Nigeria. The current GDP is 1,500 dollars, and the inflation rate is 8.2%. This high poverty rate, coupled with the population pressures, induces large-scale migration. Post's adjusted refusal rate for NIVs is 31.25%, for IVs it is 44% (including adoption and DV cases, which make up 1/3 of post's IV workload).

¶2. (U) Nigeria has all of the high risk factors for passport and visa fraud, including lax identity document control; poor or nonexistent records for feeder documents such as birth certificates; powerful pull factors such as poverty and a large expatriate diaspora that encourage emigration; and endemic fraud and corruption at all levels of society. The lack of controls and a high incidence of bribery that permeates every level of society create an environment where anything and everything is available and for sale. With enormous hunger for visas as an escape route, documents that cannot be trusted, and internal security conditions that make post anti-fraud investigative travel expensive and difficult, Lagos is a high-fraud Post.

NIV FRAUD

¶3. (U) The NIV Unit continues to see a wide variety of fraudulent documents submitted to create the impression of an established travel history as well as financial and familial stability.

¶4. (SBU) The most common fraud is simple document fraud. Fake employment letters, bank statements, conference registrations and educational certificates are found on a daily, almost hourly basis on the NIV line. The suspicious documents button could be selected for most applicants. Effectively the Conoff will elicit inconsistent and unconvincing statements and applicants are refused at the window. Only 2% of Lagos FPU cases are referred by NIV.

¶5. (U) Post continues to aggressively pursue a program for discovery and prosecution (arrest referral) of applicants holding fraudulent third country visas and fake entry stamps. By collecting and disseminating detection points and equipment (loops and UV lights) to line officers, Post has discovered cases of third country visa fraud. Working in tandem with RSO, these cases have ended in the arrest of the applicants by the Special Fraud Unit of the Nigerian Police. All face prosecution under local fraud statutes.

¶6. (U) These fake third country visas run the gamut of counterfeiting tactics and print sophistication. In some of these cases the applicant was able to travel to the target country using the fraudulent document. Genuine civil and identity documents are relatively easy to acquire by fraudulent means here in Nigeria, but falsifying a record of foreign travel remains more difficult. As such, these TCN visas remain one of the most consistently reliable mechanisms for detecting fraudulent applicants and applications.

¶7. (SBU) Chinese, Australian, Indian, Malaysian, Turkish, Kenyan, Equatorial Guinean, and Brazilian fake visas have all also been discovered at Post, and most of these on multiple occasions. In many cases, applicants admit in secondary interviews with FPU to having paid substantial sums, in one case several thousand U.S. dollars, for the visas. In other cases, applicants contend the visas were provided in exchange for favors, to be determined upon issuance.

¶8. (U) Post maintains an extensive exemplar library of these finds, scanned and ready to share with other missions and agencies on request. Post continues to strengthen ties to other Missions in the community in order to verify suspicious documents.

¶9. (SBU) F1 Fraud: Student visas remain a popular target for those seeking entry to the U.S. Counterfeit West African Examination Council (WAEC) certificates (WAEC is roughly equivalent to the SAT, and is the main basis for demonstrating educational qualification for a DV, for example) continue to be a tactic for fraudulent students looking to establish their bona fides. Typically someone else will take the exam under the applicant's name. Questioning the applicant remains the primary means of exposing the imposter test taker. Post also continues to verify WAEC scores online.

¶10. (U) This reporting period, Post saw one U.S. SAT imposter. The applicant confessed and the SAT agent was exposed. The case was referred to the Nigerian Special Fraud Unit for further action.

¶11. (U) In another student visa case, an applicant posed as a government employee on scholarship. Documents purportedly from Local Government Authorities were confirmed fraudulent by FPU. The Local Government Council confirmed that the applicant was not and has never been an employee, as claimed.

¶12. (SBU) During the reporting period, Diplomatic Security and ICE investigated a marriage fraud/smuggling ring operating out of the U.S. The applicants applied for B-1/B-2 visas to attend a conference with Allied Consulting and Educational Partnership in conjunction with the Globe Program. When the applicants obtained visas and arrived in the U.S., they were matched up with American wives and filed to change status. They successfully did this for 21 applicants last year, none of whom returned to Nigeria. The subject in the U.S. is affiliated with the University of North Texas. Post has compiled a list of course participants and samples of the invitation letters and placed a lookout in CLASS. ARSO-I interviews revealed that most of the applicants are low level government employees who claimed a higher position or more skills than they actually have. Five applicants confessed and were arrested by the Nigerian Police; the police investigation continues. Applicants admitted paying upwards of \$5,300 for the document package and services.

NIV VALIDATION STUDY

¶13. (SBU) In early 2009, Lagos FPU conducted a validation study of B1/B2 visas. The study looked at over 1000 randomly selected cases dating from 2005. Of those cases, 90% returned, 5% overstayed and 1.4% adjusted status. The remaining cases were inconclusive or unused visas.

¶14. (SBU) The percentage of B1/B2s that returned in the study was higher than expected, suggesting that Post may need to refine NIV-related interviewing and anti-fraud training to focus on narrower categories of greater-risk applicants. Post's overall NIV refusal rate remains at approximately 30%, due to a continuing high level of document fraud and large numbers of weak F-1 applicants. This was the first validation study post conducted in four years.

Post plans an aggressive schedule of NIV validation studies over the coming year to help us refine our NIV adjudications.

¶15. (U) Post has compiled the information for these studies using the methodology standardized by CA/FPP and the reporting functions of CCD and the AdHoc system to generate the appropriate reports. The reports have been submitted to the ADIS/USVISIT system through the appropriate channels.

ACS FRAUD

¶16. (U) Financial scams - known as '419' scams, after the section of the Nigerian penal code relating to financial crime - continue to be an issue for ACS and a major burden to the correspondence unit at Post. The ACS Unit receives a daily average of 13 inquiries through e-mail and telephone from American citizens as well as citizens from other countries who have been defrauded by Nigerians posing as romantic interests, Americans in distress, or lawyers trying to disburse a settlement or inheritance. Some of these American citizens have sent large sums of money to Nigeria. Post has developed FAQs and a script to help duty officers and others handle 419 calls and has shared these with OCS. We provide resources for 419 victims on our website and track 419 calls using the Crisis application.

¶17. (U) U.S. passport fraud continues to be a moderate risk. The great majority of DS-11 applicants are dual-national minors. Typical profiles are first-time applicants born in Nigeria; U.S.-born first-time applicants in their late teens or early twenties, who have never been issued a U.S. passport; and U.S.-born renewals whose only passport was issued when they were an infant. For such applications post requests original birth certificates, photos of the applicant showing age progression, and questions applicants and parents separately.

¶18. (U) A German consular attach at the Lagos airport caught a Nigerian woman attempting to use a U.S. passport to board a Germany-bound flight. Upon questioning, the woman was not able to describe the passport application process, her life in the United States, the lengths of the flights to and from Germany or the U.S., or other details. The official seized the passport and turned it over to the ConGen Lagos. The true passport holder, reached in the U.S., later confirmed that her passport had been stolen a few weeks previously, and seemed shocked that her passport had turned up in Nigeria; the Germans, noting the resemblance between the fraudulent bearer and the photograph, suspected the true bearer had lent it to a relative. Unfortunately the impostor fled the airport and no picture or identity was obtained from her.

¶19. (U) The majority of CRBA applications are for children with one American citizen parent, often who is resident in the United States, not present to apply, and who has minimal evidence of a relationship with the mother. Post encountered no instances of outright CRBA fraud, but unreliable local vital records documents and the fact that the Amcit parent is rarely available for interview make this a continuing risk for post.

IV FRAUD

¶20. (U) Marriage into the large Nigerian-American community in the U.S. has been by far the most common path to American residency for Nigerians seeking legal and illegal emigration. An overwhelming percentage of post's petition-based IVs are marriage-based (IR-1 and K-1s especially). Nigerian law and custom recognizes three types of marriage - traditional, religious and civil - all of which are valid for immigration purposes and which involve different customs, procedures and participants. These factors, in addition to poor civil records, corrupt courts that issue divorce decrees, and Nigerian naming conventions that permit applicants to add or drop names easily, make such cases extremely susceptible to fraud.

¶21. (SBU) Post's IV Unit referred a total of 480 IV cases (3 %) to FPU in FY09. As such, Post recommends 1.5% of all IV cases for revocation. Cases reported fraudulent are refused under section 212(a)(6)(c).

¶22. (U) Marriage fraud can involve entire communities. Family

members are informed of the pending application and collaborate to deceive consular investigators. To elicit facts, investigators employ courtesy and easily blend in with communities. The questions asked by investigators must constantly change. Therefore, investigators cannot rely on the same formula for every case.

¶23. (SBU) Investigators are creative in finding evidence of a hidden marital relationship at the applicant's true residence. For example, in a CR1 case, the investigator found a Bible in the applicant's home inscribed "Mr. and Mrs. (and the family name)" inside. Further evidence included other books with her listed as Mrs., she wore a wedding ring and men's clothing in the closet.

¶24. (U) So that investigators can more easily blend into the communities where they work, FPU consciously recruits investigators with regional linguistic skills. Interviews are mostly conducted in English; however, confessions and stories are often obtained in another language.

¶25. (U) Document fraud, especially divorce decrees, is a significant element in IV marriage fraud (Ref B) FPU continues to verify divorce decrees when it is a determining factor for a relationship.

¶26. (U) In the reporting period, FPU assisted DOJ with a pending naturalization case in Pennsylvania. Through several visits to sites throughout Lagos, FPU was confirmed that the divorce documents provided by the subject at the court hearing were not genuine, and that the subject was still married in Nigeria. With this information DOJ was able to deny the naturalization and the subject faces deportation.

DV FRAUD

¶27. (SBU) Nigeria is one of the top diversity visa (DV) countries worldwide. In FY08, Lagos adjudicated 5,678 DVs, over 1/3 of post's IV workload. In DVs as in other IVs, relationship fraud is the chief vulnerability. In particular, Lagos line officers are confronted with many "clip-on" spouses: sudden "marriages" which occur after an applicant is notified that they have won the DV lottery. From March to August, Post found 108 DV applicants ineligible under 212(a)(6)(e) for claiming fraudulent spouses on their DV applications.

¶28. (SBU) FPU has developed several techniques to uncover fraudulent DV marriages and the facilitators behind them. Before the interview, line officers examine the forms. Fraud indicators to watch are a "care of" address - which is often that of the visa fixer -- the mailing address, the contact address in the U.S., and the handwriting. Late night calls to the applicant's home often prove to be an effective investigation technique, as the "married" couple often lives separately.

¶29. (U) Another highly successful investigative tool is Lagos FPU's collection of wedding albums filled with staged wedding photographs submitted by applicants. By spotting the actors repeatedly posing as guests and family members at supposedly unrelated marriage ceremonies, FPU has been able to identify several DV fraud facilitator cells. Post had adopted a pre-interview "album check" so adjudicating officers have the benefit of this intelligence before the applicants were called to the IV window. Unfortunately, the facilitators quickly adapted and have largely moved away from staged photos, so the mandatory check was dropped, though suspicious photos may still be compared to the album library.

¶30. (U) Where do clip-on spouses come from? From touts operating out of internet cafes and other parts of the well-established local DV assistance service industry. As internet penetration is still relatively low in Nigeria and costs are high, the gap has been filled by a proliferation of commercial cyber cafes. Cyber cafes advertise for people, usually single, to pay to have an agent assist them to submit a DV entry. An agent will then submit his/her own address instead of the applicant's true return address on entry form. If the entrant wins, he/she is contacted by the agent, who matches them with a spouse.

¶31. (U) The touts collude with the cyber cafes and even advertisers and the media to vary computers to ensure certain IP addresses are not overly used, to attract new customers, and ward off competition. For example, post recorded a podcast on how to apply for the DV program, stressing that applicants did not need to hire agents to apply and warning against fraud in DV applications. We hoped to get it run as a public service announcement on Nigerian radio. The radio stations turned it down, however, because they could get paid

advertising from the touts and cyber cafes.

¶32. (U) Post is constantly on alert for the little details that can expose a fraudulent case. A backdated marriage certificate was proven fraudulent by examining photographic evidence of the ceremony. DV1 was interviewed separately in FPU, claiming a bona fide marriage to DV2. In examining her wedding album, the investigator observed with the aid of a magnifying glass that her traditional marriage pictures were taken with a 2009 calendar in the background, disproving her claim that the couple married in April 2008.

¶33. (U) The FPU daily conducts split interviews with the principal applicant and the derivatives, and the results are remarkable. This allows a more in-depth analysis of the claimed relationship, while at the same time freeing up time for the IV officers to handle more cases. Short of a field investigation, the split interview technique continues to provide the most facts regarding applicants' claimed relationships.

¶34. (U) Post made administrative changes in scheduling FPU split interviews. As there is a heavier caseload at the end of the DV year, Lagos now schedules immediate interviews until space is filled, instead of having applicants return at a later date. The FPM also added the responsibility of interviewing to the analyst position thereby increasing staff availability. These changes ensured timely adjudication throughout the DV year. In FY09 49% of IV cases referred to FPU were found fraudulent. Conoffs continue to be effective in their decisions of which cases to refer.

ADOPTION FRAUD

¶35. (SBU) Since March, Lagos has conducted 70 Nigerian IR-3 adoption field investigations. Almost half were in the Igbo-speaking eastern region. This is the home region of the majority of Nigerian-Americans and, as a predominantly Christian area, state authorities tend to be more amenable to adoption than in Muslim-dominated states. Travel to the entire region is dangerous and expensive, and requires COM approval for three of the states. Given the number of cases and priority post places on adoption investigations, we hope to arrange trips at least twice per year. Although in the past it has been a restricted area, FPU will also accept cases from security level four states. This period, 20 adoption cases were closed out from this region, in some cases after pending as long as two years.

¶36. (SBU) FPU's adoption-related caseload has fluctuated in recent years: 33 cases in FY 07, 148 in FY 08, 109 in FY09. There are several reasons: an overall rise in adoption case numbers in Nigeria; in early 2008, post made it a priority to clear out a backlog of pending I-604 investigations; and post streamlined procedures for line officers to refer cases to FPU. Security restrictions highlighted in the Nigeria Travel Warning make travel to Nigeria's eastern states is expensive: a September 2009 trip to do ACS outreach and adoption-related fraud investigations for four days cost post over USD 14,000. Post strives to plan quarterly trips to the region, but these are not always possible for logistical or budgetary reasons. Post has designated two line officers and an FPU investigator to specialize in Nigerian adoption procedures in an effort to resolve those cases that can be done without a full field investigation.

¶37. (U) In June, FPU Investigator Ijeoma Ndurue traveled to four eastern Nigeria states to conclude 30 adoption cases; he found fraud in 11 of them.

¶38. (U) The adoption fraud seen at post generally does not involve falsified documents or outright baby selling. Typical cases involve relatives attempting to adopt a well cared for nephew, niece or sibling who would not meet the INA orphan definition. We do occasionally encounter more egregious cases.

¶39. (U) In one case, the guardians of two legitimately adopted children added their own child to the adoption orders. The investigator visited the guardians' home and discovered the guardians lived with the two adoptive children and one child of their own. The neighbor corroborated that the guardians intended to

send their own daughter to the U.S.

¶40. (U) In another case, post confirmed that local authorities improperly issued genuine adoption orders. The court registrar verified the papers. The issue of whether it is permissible for an unmarried person to adopt children of the opposite sex was put to the registrar. She stated that such an adoption is not allowed by law and suggested that the girls are his blood relatives and he is adopting them for immigration purposes. There is also the issue of the Petitioner being a Catholic Reverend Father. It is inconsistent with the status of a Reverend Father to purport to be a parent by way of adoption. Further, Abia State Law says that it is unacceptable for an unmarried man to adopt girls. In conclusion, the adoption is not valid and the applicants are ineligible for a visa. This request for investigation came from the Department of Homeland Security.

DNA TESTING

¶41. (SBU) DNA testing has proven an invaluable tool in the deterrence of fraud. There are many instances where the evidence of relationship that would allow officers to make their decisions is unreliable, destroyed, or simply not available. Family photography, aside from the occasional posed studio portrait, did not become widespread until the late 1970s and early 1980s, and birth certificates have no security features to speak of and can be obtained easily. During this reporting period, the buccal swab samples were collected by an IV LES at the clinic where the required visa medical examinations were conducted. This duty rotated around the section. The Consulate sent the samples to the laboratory and the notarized results were returned directly to the Consulate via courier. Over a six month period in 2008, DNA testing was suggested for roughly 1,004 visa applicants. In the last year, less than 10 negative DNA results came in. Post does not anticipate a significant change in DNA testing results due to the new guidelines. The only changes that will impact the applicants are the location and the payment procedure. Payments for DNA are now made through banks as opposed to clinics.

¶42. (U) The need for DNA testing is illustrated in this example. A DV applicant brought in a clip on spouse and new baby. The line officer requested DNA testing for mother and baby. While at the clinic to pick up the results, an LES happened to see another woman breastfeeding the baby. The DNA results were confirmed negative for both the DV1 and DV2. The applicant confessed and was found ineligible under 212(a)(6)(E) for attempting to smuggle a DV3.

¶43. (U) DNA testing has been especially useful in IRs/CRs and F4 cases and less useful in IR5 cases. Few if any IR5s returned with negative DNA or unfinished testing. The section is currently undergoing a statistical analysis of DNA findings. A tracking spreadsheet has been created and is being updated to show the processing of each case in the first half of 2008 in which DNA is requested. As a result of this study, we hope to produce accurate statistics to show how many applicants do not proceed with DNA and also the percentage of negative DNA results. We hope to have this study finished in the next few months. Applicants who know their relationship is not bona fide, in general, do not follow through with the DNA testing. Post has encountered several recent cases where a principal applicant was asked to do a DNA test with a derivative child, only for the principal applicant to return to the Consulate and say that they changed their mind - they don't want the child to travel after all. As the principal applicant (PA) has by this point executed a visa application for the derivative, the PA is told there will be no visa issuance until the requested DNA testing is completed. In some cases, the principal applicant acquiesces and the DNA results are negative, resulting in a 6E finding. Other principal applicants attempt to remove the problematic child by 'killing them off' on paper - bringing in a fraudulent death certificate. FPU investigation into these documents reveals the fraud, and the end result is still a 6E.

DHS FRAUD

¶44. (U) DHS Transportation Letter requests now average about 10 per month. Previously, most applicants presented letters stating that they were robbed or lost them. Lately, they commonly claim to have left their Green Cards in the U.S. Three applicants who were issued Transportation Letters this summer applied for new Transportation letters at post in September. They traveled to the U.S., returned to Nigeria without obtaining new Green Cards, but all presented documentation that they applied for replacements. Post enjoys a good relationship with DHS in Accra and receives quick responses to LPR status inquiries.

¶45. (U) FPU receives and processes investigation requests from USCIS District Adjudicating Officers to verify documents, mostly divorce decrees, submitted for many different types of petitions in the United States. Lagos closed 112 DHS cases this period. Forty-five percent of these resulted in a report of fraud.

ALIEN SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING

¶46. (U) In both the IV and NIV section we see frequent attempts at alien smuggling, whether through a sham marriage or the addition of an extra child to an existing visa application. In some cases it is merely a member of the extended family who does not have a legal claim to the immigration benefit. However, in some cases, such as the frequent DV "clip-ons", there is a financial motivation; someone has agreed to pay in order to have that person added to an otherwise-legitimate application. From March to August, 108 applicants were found 6e.

DS INVESTIGATIONS

¶47. (U) The Consular Section in general and the FPU in particular work closely with the ARSO-I assigned to Lagos. Unfortunately, the reporting period saw a gap between the departure of the outgoing ARSO-I in early June and the arrival of the current ARSO-I in late August. ARSO-I Cases are referred to the ARSO-I from the IV, NIV, and ACS units, with the referral documented in the notes for the case. The ARSO-I has aided us in pursuing marriage fraud rings stateside through his U.S.-based DS contacts, and here in Lagos he has been pursuing the vendors of the fraudulent documents presented in interviews. His close working relationship with the Special Fraud Unit and the Special Intelligence Branch of the Nigerian federal police has resulted in the arrest of a number of fraudulent applicants. Through spot reports he keeps the consular section informed of the outcomes of the referred cases. The ARSO-I also takes referrals from the FPU in cases requiring complex investigations, those with a criminal nexus in the U.S., or cases requiring liaison with local law enforcement. The ARSO-I and the FPM have a strong working relationship and often collaborate on interviews, investigations and training. The ARSO-I and the FPM also benefit from the strong support of the Consular Chief and the Regional Security Officer. During the reporting period, Diplomatic Security authorized and post approved the creation of a new FSN-Investigator position to be filled in FY2010. The new FSN-I will work exclusively for the ARSO-I. This addition, along with the new consular investigator discussed below, will greatly enhance the investigative capabilities of the ARSO-I and, by extension, the FPU.

HOST COUNTRY DOCUMENTS

¶48. (U) While Nigeria has recently updated its passport design to incorporate a microchip in accordance with the international e-passport standards, the older design remains valid and in circulation. It consists of a biodata page encased in plastic, UV-reactant features, and the passport number punched into the top edge of the inside pages.

¶49. (U) The new e-passport incorporates other security features in addition to the microchip. It includes holographic and UV-reactant features and each visa page in the booklet has the passport number punched into the outside edge. It is important to note that, while

the document itself may appear more secure, the underlying process in order to obtain the passport remains highly flawed. Applicants for a Nigerian passport must submit a national identification card or a birth certificate, fraudulent versions of which are easily obtained locally. Applicants must also submit an affidavit from a 'guarantor' who will attest to their good character. Attempts by Nigerian immigration to use biometrics collection to enhance passport security are hampered by the absence of a networked database to allow comparison between passport offices. Even with the additional security features, the Nigerian passport remains highly susceptible to fraud.

150. (U) Post has found numerous cases in which the new E series passports have serious quality control issues, i.e. lack of laminate on the biodata page. Each case is referred for verification to the Nigerian Immigration Service and in cases involving legitimate quality control problems applicants are required to obtain a new E series passport. An updated dossier on E series detection points is available from Post on request.

151. (U) As a result of these continuing problems with Nigerian passport security, Post continues to review all passports using the AssureID document checker.

152. (U) Nigerian passport numbers are often reused. A high number of legitimate Nigerian passports seen on the line have been previously reported lost/stolen by the Nigerian authorities. Lagos sees a dozen or more of these cases on a weekly basis in NIV. There are no fraud indicators, and often, applicants who have prior good travel on a previous passport have received one of these passports. Each case usually returns a Lost/Stolen PPT hit in CLASS due to the passport number.

153. (U) Nigerian civil documents have essentially no modern security features. Marriage certificates vary widely in appearance between issuing jurisdictions. Marriage certificates and birth certificates are both printed on plain paper with biographic information added by hand. Such documents are quite easy to counterfeit, and frequently are. In addition, controls and oversight in government offices are such that for sufficient payment a person can fraudulently obtain authentic versions of virtually any government document. For example, FPU research has shown that authentic divorce decrees signed by a particular registrar are almost invariably obtained fraudulently. In light of the prevalence and ease of civil document forgery in Nigeria, local documents are largely discounted in the visa adjudication process unless they are authenticated at the source and supported with ample personal evidence in an interview.

COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT

154. (U) The FPU has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Nigerian Police Department for many years, referring cases to them where Nigerian laws have been broken. The Special Fraud Unit has aided in the arrest of applicants who have presented fraudulent documents, as well as tracking down the document vendors.

155. (SBU) The FPU has also enjoyed years of support from local governments, schools and marriage registries in our verifications of documents. Lately, however, FPU investigators have been harassed by the National Population Commission to provide money for verifications, usually 10,000 Naira, the equivalent of about 70 U.S. dollars. This is apparently a revenue collecting scheme on the part of the National Population Commission. In some cases, the working relationship between the investigator and the official, with whom they have dealt before, has meant the registrar could be persuaded to waive the fee; many of these government officials, however, are becoming more hard-line on this fee, making document verification a costly prospect.

156. (U) As a result of this, Lagos now requires applicants to get certain documents verified themselves. This is a new practice and it is not yet measured how this affects adjudication numbers. Some letters of verification have themselves turned out to be fraudulent.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

¶57. (U) The Lagos FPU consists of a Fraud Prevention Manager, two LES Fraud Investigators, an LES Fraud Analyst, and an ELO part-time fraud assistant. This includes one newly hired full-time LES Consular Investigator. The new investigator has been an invaluable addition, particularly in conducting split interviews for the DV program. Post has recently developed an FPU Travel Plan for FY2010 to establish a schedule for investigations to be conducted by the Consular Investigators. The fraud analyst has completed the on-line writing lab course and will apply for the March fraud prevention training at FSI. Also, Lagos welcomed a new ARSO-I at the end of August. The new ARSO-I will continue the training efforts of his predecessor, who departed post in June.

¶58. (U) From March to September, a Lagos investigator conducted a field investigation each month; twice an ELO investigated by proxy. During that time, 160 cases were investigated outside of Lagos.

¶59. (U) Despite a staffing shortage, the Lagos FPU's caseload for Lagos area investigations has been drastically reduced. From March to September the unit closed out approximately 230 Lagos cases with the help of ELOs. Post currently has about 35 Lagos cases pending and hopes to further reduce cases to those aged one week or less. Locations require a motorpool driver and vehicle, and traffic delays prolong trips. Terrible road and weather conditions constantly challenge investigations. Measures are now in place to prevent such a backlog.

¶60. (U) The unit continues to brief incoming line officers. In June, FPU held a training session for the Consular Section. Training covered the entire spectrum of work relating to fraud prevention and its management. Also, in September Lagos hosted the Abuja Fraud Prevention Manager and an LES from Cape Town for fraud training.

LIAISON and OUTREACH

¶61. (SBU) Post has also made significant progress in establishing new working relationships with host government agencies and other missions in order to further our fraud prevention initiatives. In May, the German Consulate hosted the local fraud group. Meetings are every six months and are an especially effective vessel for meeting counterparts and sharing techniques to deter fraud.

¶62. (U) Post continues to pursue an aggressive policy of referring confirmed cases of sophisticated identity and document fraud (particularly TCN visas and passports) to the local detachment of Nigeria's Special Fraud Unit (SFU), an agency of the national police force. While the SFU has been particularly responsive in apprehending fraudulent applicants, police have offered little information or evidence regarding these cases Post-arrest.

¶63. (SBU) There appears little evidence that SFU has coordinated these investigations in aims of finding and prosecuting the purveyors of the counterfeit visas and passports. In a few cases, Post has reason to suspect that despite definitive evidence of fraud, charges were never filed, the implication being that bribes had been paid to resolve the matter. SFU has made no efforts to raise the profile of these arrests in the media, further clouding the utility of arrest referrals is discouraging the use of fake visas and passports by the general population. In tandem with Abuja's RSO and the ARSO-I in Lagos, Post continues to monitor and review the arrest program. On a very positive note, Post has noticed a reduction in the number of applicants who present fake TCN visas, a fact that Post has attributed to the inception of this cooperation with SFU.

¶64. (SBU) Post has one example in which an applicant applied for a Swiss visa using a passport containing a fake visa from Equatorial Guinea. The Swiss confiscated the passport and returned it to the MFA. This same applicant has now applied for a US visa using the same confiscated passport, evidenced by the Swiss stamp in the passport. The Swiss Embassy has confirmed the facts of this case.

While this case does not involve the SFU, it raises concerns about the lack of seriousness with which the use of fraudulent documents in general is viewed by Nigerian authorities.

BLAIR